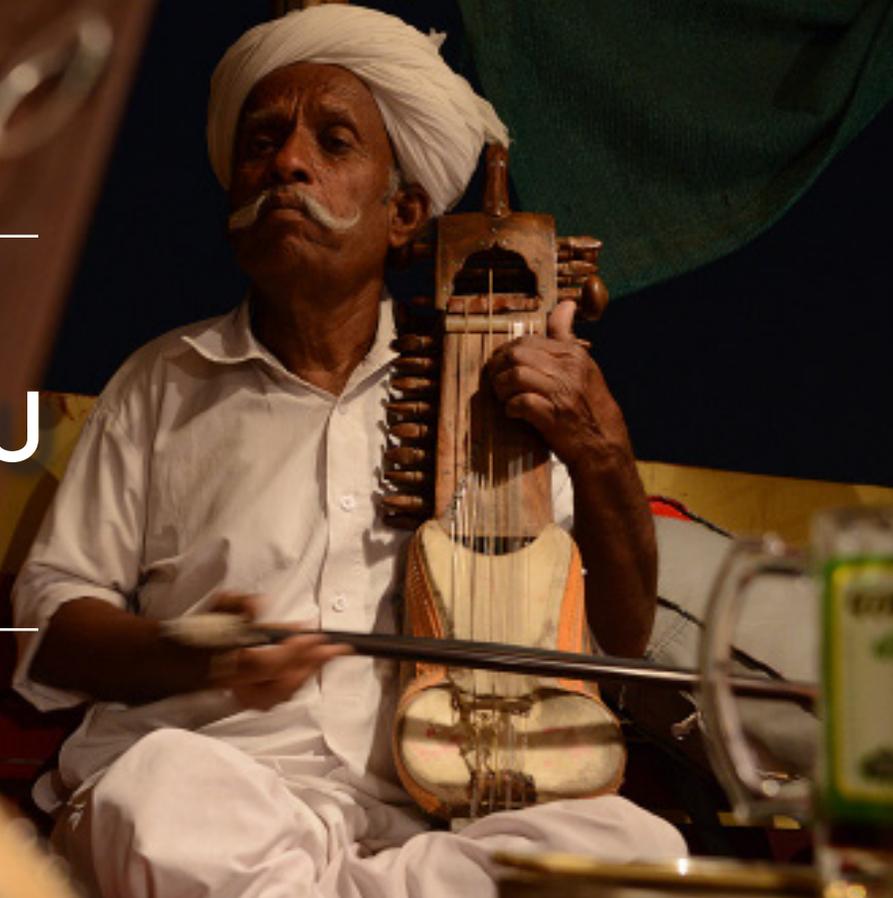


# THE LAKHA-MADOU PROJECT



TRADITIONAL / FUSION

RAJASTHAN (INDIA) / MALI

The 'Lakha-Madou' project brings together two master musicians in an exciting new collaboration - a meeting of bardic oral-storytelling traditions from Rajasthan, India and Mali, West Africa. A never-before presented fusion of traditions, the ancient strings of the kora and sindhi sarangi weaving a magical tapestry of soundscapes to create music of timeless beauty.

The seeds for the project were first sown at the 2011 Amarrass Desert Music Festival in Delhi, where the two artists first met and jammed together at the festival finale. The Lakha~Madou Project premiered at the 2014 edition of the Amarrass Festival, with the first series of recordings made in November 2014, and also featuring collaborations with Palestinian-American band Painted Caves, and Brazilian bassist/DJ/Producer DJ Tudo.

The Lakha~Madou Project reunited in May 2015 for a second series of recordings at the 'Amarrass Terrace Sessions', with a performance at TC's in New Delhi, India. A subsequent series of recordings took place in October-November 2015, and showcased at the monthly Amarrass Nights at Lodi event in New Delhi, India. The self-titled debut album is scheduled for release this summer on Amarrass Records.

**Group Size:** 3 artists + 1 Artist Manager / Sound Engineer

- **Lakha Khan** - Sindhi Sarangi (Indian folk fiddle)
- **Madou Sidiki Diabatè** - kora (African lute harp)
- **Dane Khan** - dholak (double headed Indian folk drum)

## DISCOGRAPHY:



THE LAKHA~MADOU PROJECT

RELEASE DATE: SUMMER 2016

**STREAMING:** <https://soundcloud.com/user3868359>



NEW DELHI

MADISON WISCONSIN

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# THE LAKHA-MADOU PROJECT

## NOVEMBER 2011

The two masters meet for the first time at the 1st Amarrass Desert Music Festival held at Siri Fort, New Delhi, India. Madou and Lakha Khan shared the stage during the festival finale jam “Meeting of the Minstrels”, along with Vieux Farka Tourè and Barmer Boys.

## 2012

The two masters meet for the first time at the 1st Amarrass Desert Music Festival held at Siri Fort, New Delhi, India. Madou and Lakha Khan shared the stage during the festival finale jam “Meeting of the Minstrels”, along with Vieux Farka Tourè and Barmer Boys.

## NOVEMBER 2014

Madou and Lakha Khan meet up again and the first series of recordings takes place at the 3rd edition of the Amarrass Music Festival. Debut of the project at Lodi Gardens at the festival opening. video: // The duo also collaborate on recording sessions with Palestinian-American band Painted Caves, and Brazilian bassist/DJ/Producer DJ Tudo.

## MAY 2015

The second series of the ‘Amarrass Terrace Sessions’ recordings take place in early May, with a preview performance at the monthly Amarrass Nights at Lodi event in New Delhi, India. Madou also performs at ‘An Ode to the Blues’ Festival at Counterculture, Bangalore, India.

## OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2015

The third series of the ‘Amarrass Terrace Sessions’ recordings take place in October and early November, with a performance at the monthly Amarrass Nights at Lodi event in New Delhi, India.

## AWARDS

### LAKHA KHAN:

**SANGEET NATAK AKADEMI AWARD** for his contribution to Rajasthani folk music, Marudhara Foundation (Kolkata) recognition

## STREAMING

### Soundcloud:

<https://soundcloud.com/user3868359>

## More about the Artists:

### LAKHA KHAN:

Lakha Khan is the undisputed master of the sindhi sarangi, a 27 stringed bowed string instrument from the Indian desert state of Rajasthan. At 68, he is a living legend, a national award winner, and described as “a real treasure” (Songlines Magazine) and his “songbook contains the roots of India’s popular music” (Chicago Tribune). He was born in the village of Raneri in Jodhpur district, Rajasthan into a family of traditional musicians from the Manganiyar community - the storytellers of their communities and for the upper class land owners and royalty. He has performed extensively across Rajasthan and India, and internationally in the U.S., Europe and Asia with recent performances at The Edinburgh Folk Festival (2011), Amarrass Music Festival (2011, 2014), Peabody Essex Museum (2013), Old and New Dreams Festival Chicago (2014), Le Senghor, Bruxelles (2016).

### MADOU SIDIKI DIABATÉ,

from Bamako, Mali in West Africa, is a 71st generation virtuoso of the kora, a 20 string African lute harp. Madou started playing the kora at age three and learned his art under his father, Sidiki Diabaté, a man generally referred to as the “King of the Kora”. His elder brother, Toumani Diabaté is also a famed koraist and Grammy Award winner. If Madou Sidiki Diabaté’s lineage is formidable, then so is his talent. In his hands, the kora “sounds not of this world at all. His rippling, harp-like arpeggios and dizzyingly complex interlocking melodies seem to descend on warm wings from a yearning heaven of billowing, fragrant heat” (The WIRE Magazine). He has performed on stages across the globe and collaborated with musicians such as Damon Albarn, Vieux Farka Touré, Lakha Khan, Painted Caves and more. His album ‘Mali Latino’ with Alex Wilson and Ahmed Fofana was a 2010 ‘Top of the World’ Album in Songlines. In 2012, Amarrass Records released his solo kora album ‘Madou Sidiki Diabate - Live in India’ to critical acclaim.

## Track notes:

### Duga (Vulture) -

A song that was both spontaneous in its creation, and serendipitous in the nature of the its subject matter. One of those moments when we were glad that we had the tape rolling, so to speak, as the magic of the strings ascended on the night-time terrace in Gurgaon, India, and a reverential hush descended on the small audience in gathering. Duga (vulture, or gidh in Hindi) is one of the oldest pieces from the Mande repertory and dates back to the reign of Sundiata Keita, the 13th century warrior king who founded Mali. It is based in the minor mode, indicating possible vocal origins. It was originally played for the most renowned warriors, those who had narrowly escaped death, but has since been associated first with Duga Koro, king of Kore, and then with the Segu king Da Monson Jara who defeated him. The gidh features prominently in Hindu mythology, such as in the epic Ramayana, in which the half-man half-eagle Garuda’s two sons are vultures\* Jatayu and his brother Sampati, with whom are associated stories of courage and self-sacrifice. It was Jatayu, gravely wounded in battle with Ravana, who informed Rama in which direction Sita was being taken by the Lanka king. Lakha Khan’s sarangi poignantly expresses the story in his song Gidh ne godhi liye Raghunath (translates to ‘Rama took me (Jatayu) in his arms’).

### Sassi Punnu (in Raag Multani) -

A traditional Rajasthani love song (reminiscent of Shakespeare’s famous tragedy Romeo and Juliet), with Lakha Khan taking the lead on the sindhi sarangi, and Madou’s kora fusing in beautifully. Cascading layers of sound that showcase his virtuosic jazz sensibilities, equally at home amidst the folk melodies of the Rajasthan desert.

### Chomasu (Monsoon) -

Two traditional compositions from two different continents, with the common theme of water. Lakha Khan plays a Ragini in Malhari, a derivative melody related to a raga, played to welcome the monsoon season in India. Madou improvises a traditional song Viriba ye (the baobab tree, an icon of the African savanna, and known as the “tree of life” for its succulent nature, absorbing and storing water during the rainy season). There is an important message for conservation of our natural resources and nature associated with this song. As Madou says “once it (the baobab) comes down it never comes back. In the same way as a person important in your life (like a father or mother or brother) who goes away will never come back.



MADOU SIDIKI DIABATÉ @ DEPOT 29  
© 2015 ANKUR MALHOTRA AMARRASS.COM

# THE LAKHA-MADOU PROJECT

RAJASTHAN (INDIA) / MALI





Sakar Khan

Indian label Amarrass puts folk virtuosos in the spotlight

The late Sakar Khan was one of India's most revered and respected folk musicians. A member of western Rajasthan's Manganiyar community of hereditary musicians, he was the greatest living master of one of the world's oldest bowed instruments, the kamaicha or kamancha, a 17-string violin-like instrument with a body carved from solid mango wood. Khan died in 2013, having been decorated with numerous awards in his lifetime, including the Padma Shri, one of India's highest civilian honours, and having performed across the globe, alongside the likes of Yehudi Menuhin and George Harrison. In addition he appeared on many recordings – his kamaicha can be heard on Ocora's *Rajasthan: Musicians Of The Desert* and Tangent's *Music In The World Of Islam* series, among others – and he was also recorded for the Smithsonian Institute. Before 2012, however, when the Delhi based label Amarrass Records visited his home village of Hamira in western Rajasthan, he had never made or released an album under his own name. On record, Khan's musicianship had always been presented as an example of a local tradition, not the work of an individual artist.

Taking Sakar Khan as a classic example of an imbalance that the label is dedicated to correcting, Ankur Malhotra, one of the four codirectors of Amarrass, reflects on how Indian folk traditions have often been consigned to the important but marginal category of ethnomusicological recordings. "Indian classical music has enjoyed a global presence," he says, "but the same hasn't happened for the folk musicians."

Inspired by an appreciation for the work of Alan Lomax and Cecil Sharp, Malhotra and his label partner Azshutosh Sharma had begun to wonder why the great folk musicians of India had been so seldom recognised as solo recording artists. "Ashutosh and I are longtime blues fans," Malhotra explains, namechecking Son House and Mississippi John Hurt among others. "When we started thinking who are the great blues musicians of India we couldn't come up with names. For a music lover, that was a sad thing."

Founded in 2009, the label's first release was *The Manganiyar Seduction*, a companion record to the globally acclaimed musical theatre production of the same name, built around an orchestra sized contingent of Manganiyar musicians. Seeing the production was a lightbulb moment, recalls Malhotra. Along with his interest in blues field recordings, it prompted Amarrass's first trips into the villages of Rajasthan's Thar Desert.

"We saw the [Manganiyar] musicians on stage, performing a 70 minute theatrical piece, and realised that these are master musicians here," he continues. "Within their community they've got centuries of this tradition imbibed in them. Ashutosh and I decided, let's pick up some gear, whatever gear... A friend lent us his cassette recorder, we bought some nice microphones and went into the desert."

Malhotra and Sharma's first foray immediately prompted further expeditions that laid the foundations of the label's At Home series, dedicated to recording specific individual masters such as Sakar Khan. The extraordinary music captured on their journeys is presented in a manner that marks Amarrass's attitude

to field recording as a departure from the conventions of ethnomusicological compilations. Rather than subsuming musicians and styles under the category headings of location and tradition – the Manganiyar music of Rajasthan approach – Amarrass has opted instead to package the releases as individualised, commercially oriented projects. "In the Western world, for example, or even in Bollywood, the artists are known by their names," says Malhotra. "That wasn't the case here. There was a cultural homogenisation going on, the artists had become tourist emblems. It was important to change that."

The label's business side is approached with a fair trade ethos, with musicians receiving 50 per cent of net profits. Amarrass has also jumpstarted the flagging local production of traditional instruments in the area by commissioning and buying new kamaichas and morchangas (the Rajasthani mouth harp, played on their releases by Rais Khan) from local craftspeople, and allowing them to find new buyers through the label's website. To benefit musicians in the long term, Amarrass also has to keep an eye on the future.

"This is an oral tradition that has been passed on for centuries," says Malhotra, "but there is also a lot of change happening. How do you keep this musical tradition relevant for the next generation? It needs to be sustainable, to bring in money, and it also needs to bring in respect – and to have an artist's photograph on the cover of an album speaks immensely, versus having sand dunes on the cover." □ Amarrass Records are distributed in the UK by Harmonia Mundi. [amarrass.com](http://amarrass.com)  
Francis Gooding

## Soundcheck A–Z

New CDs, vinyl, downloads, streams, etc

### Gilles Aubry

*The Amplification Of Souls*

ADOCS Verlag CD+BK

As speaker hum and empty plosives congeal into a stuttered mic check for Jesus, a slight squeal suggests the looming threat of feedback. Because so many of the churches in the Democratic Republic of the Congo's capital Kinshasa are open air affairs, the rumble of motorcycles and automobiles accompanies the ambience of a group slowly tuning up as worshippers gather. Preachers punch through the din with bursts of noise louder than anything else, the flat lines of distortion making palpable the power of their authority. Handmade PAs hit their limits as microphones bear witness to the possession of souls and of space. And then, sudden quiet save for the faint buzz of the sound system. Speaker towers of Babel from the Heart of Darkness, respectfully recorded and remixed for headphones and museums thousands of miles away.

The jump cuts are jarring, reminding anyone listening that this is no straightforward documentary. The voice of the sound artist Gilles Aubry resounds here too. *The Amplification Of Souls* is, according to its careful and copious framing, Aubry's audio essay on Kinshasa's religious soundscape. Congolese charismatic churches are a laudable focus given the immensity of the phenomenon and the general indifference to it in the wider world, perhaps because mega churches and prosperity gospel seem more essentially US than African. Attempting what the artist contends is "a material-based form of cultural interpretation", the work stands as a studious, self-aware approach to sonic ethnography. Aubry's project is so steeped in reflexivity and rigorous attention to the sounds and their contexts and meanings, it clearly seeks to pre-empt perfunctory charges of appropriation. "He doesn't even understand what we're saying," says a churchgoer quoted in the sleeve notes. "Them, the whites, they record anything."

What constitutes understanding here is a crucial vexing point. A dozen minutes in, the tongues begin. The glossolalia is striking in itself. Alien and arresting, it has an undistorted sonic clarity in contrast to the punchy preachers. It also seems to mirror the varied textures of the audio essay itself, composed of multiple sound sources generated by different people with different objectives: church services and evangelical street campaigns, radio and video, cooking and football. At one point, a burst of traditional music, full of clapping and ululation, points more toward continuities than contrasts, while the appearance of local rap and meandering Hawaiian guitar suggest other Others to be heard. All the while, Aubry's artistic voice emerges in the layering of samples, their stereo spatialisation and the inevitable narrative arc that emerges from his rearrangement of

such disparate sonic documents.

Presented as academic sound art, *The Amplification Of Souls* comes with an 80 page booklet including an interview with Aubry that contains the phrase "neo-colonial representation" in its subtitle. It also boasts an essay on "The Sonic Materialities Of Belief" by a musicologist and cultural anthropologist which notes, among other things, that Congolese charismatic movements themselves "appropriated" the patina, and hence the power, of noise and distortion from Pentecostal missionaries. Presented first as a sound installation and later as an ongoing set of public performances, Aubry's remixed recordings at once stand as an impressionistic refraction of Kinshasa's soundscape and as the material embodiment of sounds that he would like to let speak for themselves. In one passage, he pairs his collage with a 34 minute excerpt of a spiritual deliverance service. That excerpt provides a great deal more context and less composure initiative, though the artist's act of framing remains. In another show of transparency, Aubry's original recordings of the service in full have been archived online.

Even so, what makes this anything other than churchy Congotronics? Why choose Kinshasa instead of Kansas City? Or, for that matter, Berlin? Not only does the city that Aubry calls home play host to numerous charismatic churches, some are even Congolese. Obviously, the specific site of these recordings is crucial to their circulation as art in Europe and the US, but it's deeply ironic that, against the coolness of Kinshasa trance traditionalists like Konono No 1, Aubry must seek out possessed Christians to locate the hot exoticism Western audiences expect. How would Kinshasa's charismatic communities receive this project? Would it sound like understanding? Should that guide the way audiences elsewhere experience it? The emphasis on sound as material culture suggests that we're not meant to attend to the content so much as the deracinated affects of the audio. Perhaps glossolalia itself offers an answer. Does the lexical register matter when all that we're waiting for is the outbreak of the unintelligible?

Wayne Marshall

### Banko Ghodo

*Various*

Amarrass CD

### Mitha Bol

*Various*

Amarrass CD

### Madou Sidiki Diabaté

*Live In India*

Amarrass CD

### Live At Amarrass Desert Music Festival 2011

*Various*

Amarrass CD

New Delhi based Amarrass Records is committed to doing for Indian folk music

what Alan Lomax did for American folk and blues in the 20th century, by visiting artists at home and recording them in performance. The compilations *Mitha Bol* and *Banko Ghodo* are the first two volumes in what the label calls its field recordings series, with both collecting music from the arid Thar desert region of the northwestern state of Rajasthan. It's clear that the desert is home to a wealth of astonishing virtuosity largely unknown to the wider world, from young Sawai Khan's rapidfire twanging on the morchang (a kind of jew's harp), to the ethereal, glancing microtones of Lakha Khan, the foremost living exponent of the bowed sarangi. There's a raw immediacy about these performances not often heard in Indian classical music – many of the recordings are extremely intimate and informal: you can hear Haakam Khan warming up his voice with coughs and croaks before hitting a high note that opens a channel of pure energy.

The sense of drama in performances like Haakam Khan's points to the reality that, for inhabitants of the Thar desert, songs still serve a communal role. You can watch the performances of many of the recordings collected here on the Amarrass YouTube channel, with the musicians in informal settings and bystanders coming and going. The secular bhajan sung by Bagga Khan and Meisa Ram is accompanied by strummed tambura, lilting hand-drums and metallic percussion that echoes the click-clack of Touareg music, from another desert on another continent.

That connection is deliberately explored on *Live At Amarrass Desert Music Festival 2011*, which documents an event that brought together musicians from Rajasthan and Mali, West Africa, on the same stage. One theory suggests that the music of the Thar desert migrated west, through the Middle East, giving birth to flamenco in Spain, and Mali's Saharan blues, which in turn was exported to US via the slave trade, and sowed the seeds of Delta blues. As it happens, the one pancultural jam included on this live disc falls a little flat, with Rajasthan's Barmer Boys singing (and even briefly beatboxing) over a formless groove of Indian hand drums and Malian guitar. It works much better when you're left to draw your own conclusion – and, certainly, it's possible to hear traces of tambura trance in Vieux Farka Toure's rolling Saharan guitar, even if Toure's crisp, amplified tone sits a little too close to the brightly sanitised Western conception of world music. By contrast, Madou Sidiki Diabaté – a kora player and brother of Grammy-winning korist Toumani Diabaté, and apparently one of the 71st generation of players in his family – sounds not of this world at all. His rippling, harp-like arpeggios and dizzyingly complex interlocking melodies seem to descend on warm wings from a yearning heaven of billowing, fragrant heat.

Daniel Spicer

### Laura Cannell

*Quick Sparrows Over The Black Earth*

Brawl CD

Laura Cannell's debut album feels familiar, ancestral, deeply affecting yet disconcertingly strange – at times like a more visceral take on Henry Purcell's *Fantasias For Viols*. Which is not surprising as it turns out, for these are improvisations or fantasias around fragments of melody from the fourth to 14th century.

It is a brilliantly realised vision where ancient and modern meet. Many of these solo performances are played on overbowed fiddle, where the bow is stretched over the instrument, allowing her to play all the strings simultaneously, creating a rich, churning drone effect with overtones, that on a piece like "Black Crowned Night", are akin to a hurdy gurdy. She plays as if her feet are planted firmly on terra firma, but some of her more ecstatic dancing lines point heavenwards, as on "Dagian & Duske", an exquisite, song-like composition. On a couple of pieces she plays simultaneous counterpoint melodies on double recorders.

*Quick Sparrows Over The Black Earth* was recorded at Raveningham Church in southern Norfolk and the building's acoustic is perfect for this kind of solo instrumental recital. The church is situated on the edge of marshes, which can be particularly bleak at the beginning of the year, when this was recorded. It's hard to imagine that the atmosphere didn't permeate the music, especially the haunting "Marsh Land Lullaby".

Mike Barnes

### Einstürzende Neubauten

*Lament*

BMG/Mute CD/DL/2xLP

Based around a live performance and installation commissioned by the Flemish city of Diksmuide to commemorate the centenary of what was originally referred to as the Great War, *Lament* is a concept album predicated on the notion of war as a permanent presence in our lives. This argument, like the aesthetic choices through which it has been presented, possesses the overwritten and slightly overwrought thrust of a cliché. Rather predictably, it starts with banging, crashing and scraping on "Kriegsmaschinerie" – a title that translates as "War Machinery" – giving some indication of *Lament*'s approach to its subject.

The best material has been supplied from archival research, which has thrown up cabaret performances about the Great War, poems from the period, plus a couple of rollicking war songs from a marching band known as the Harlem Hellfighters, who led the first African-American regiment into battle. However, such songs – most notably "All Of No Man's Land Is Ours" – are delivered with all the swaggering sentimentality normally associated with an amateur dramatic society's production

## 4.11

## Music for livelihoods

Music-making is an integral part of the everyday South Asian experience. Religious rituals, harvest ceremonies, the change of seasons, rites of passage – birth, marriage, celebrations, death, festivals – all provide ceremonial occasions for musical expression. Rapid socio-economic change has brought both erosion, as well as new patterns of negotiation with patron, client and market, where traditional relations find newer locations of belonging and new markets open up. In this context, a few odd routes off the beaten track have begun to claim attention, just as new ambitions have been articulated for mainstream record labels.

Ashutosh Sharma, one of the co-founders of [the innovative Amarrass Records label](#), thinks that Indian folk music “is like the black music scene was in the 1950s and early 1960s in the United States, where artists had to earn their name in Europe before being acclaimed at home.” Amarrass, unlike

Banglanatak, does not rely on state funds but engages with the market to salvage powerful yet neglected musical forms by pushing music through fair trade arrangements (50-50 splitting of income with artists); archiving and recording folk music; and creating awareness, building capacity and marketing opportunities. New cross-over, local experiences are beginning to find resonance. Amarrass “At Home” sessions include single-take unplugged-like gigs with artists, whose feel is impossible to capture in studios in urban locales or in festivals abroad. In its Desert Music Festival of 2011, performing side by side with traditional Manganiyar musicians were the acclaimed Vieux Farka Toure and Madou Sidiki Diabate. In 2012, it was Bombino and Baba Zula with the newly created “Barmer Boys” and the Siddhis from Gujarat who created unique trans-local musical experiences. The “Manganiyar Seductions” (a musical and visual experience) drew rave reviews wherever it performed in India and abroad and sold more than 1,500 copies for Amarrass. Sakar Khan, now 76, who plays the spike fiddle (*kamancha*), was recently decorated by the Government of India. Shankara Suthar, “the best Kamancha maker in India” according to Ashutosh, now responds to online demands for *kamanchas* “instead of having to make furniture in Pune for a living”, a little like Banglanatak’s own Golam Fakir, who earlier used to earn his living by carrying dead bodies from the police station to the morgue and is now a well-known folk performer. The Bant Singh Project was another unique collaboration between the radical Dalit Sikh protest folk singer Bant Singh and three electronic musicians who came to record sessions at his village of Burj Jhabbar in the Punjab Mansa District.

Such heart-warming stories apart, the market is still only an emergent one. Unlike Bollywood or Indian classical music, folk music has yet to find a sustainable niche in the market. If it were left to the market alone, perhaps these, too, would be dying traditions. On the other hand, the state seems to be unable to incentivize quality folk music and state-run performances that do not reach out to wider mass-based platforms. So when Mame Khan, a Manganiyar, performs at the upmarket Turquoise Cottage in Delhi, jamming with guitarists providing newer riffs and keeping up with his solo journeys, it is not just a spine-tingling musical experience but also an uncannily cultural and economic one. Manganiyars (a name derived from *mangna*, “to beg”) are hereditary dependent castes that perform music services at rites for their patrons, in return for gifts of clothes or money or, sometimes, a share in the harvest. Their art is one of those delicately poised cultural forms whose inheritors are either the torch bearers of newer forms of articulation or the pall-bearers of an entire way of being in a world that is changing faster than their needs and where newer idioms and motifs find popular attention.